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Editorial Comment

Dulles Report Is Revealing

ALLEN W. DULLES, who as chief of the Central Intelligence Agency was in charge of important phases of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, has now delivered himself of a 41,000-word report, "The Craft of Intelligence." But readers will be disappointed if they hope to get from it any enlightenment on the CIA role in the controversial Cuban operation.

Mr. Dulles comes to the subject near the end of his treatise, most of which concerns history and development of espionage. "Much of the American press assumed at the time that (the Bay of Pigs) action was predicated on a mistaken intelligence estimate to the effect that a landing would touch off a widespread and successful popular revolt in Cuba.

Those who had worked, as I had, with the anti-Hitler underground behind the Nazi lines in France and Italy and in Germany itself during World War II, and those who watched the tragedy of the Hungarian patriots in 1956, would have realized that spontaneous revolutions by unarmed people in this modern age are ineffective and often disastrous.

"While I have never discussed any details of the 1961 Cuban operation and do not propose to do so now, I repeat here what I have said publicly before: I know of no estimate that a spontaneous uprising of the unarmed population of Cuba would ensue."

And that is that. There is no reference at all to the well-founded reports that the CIA took an operational role well beyond that of intelligence gathering and evaluation in the sorry undertaking.

It is apparent, moreover, that Mr. Dulles believes the American people should never be told the true story of the Bay of Pigs. His booklength article — which will appear in the "1963 Britannica Book of the Year" and, in a slightly abbreviated form, is in the April issue of Harper's magazine — concludes with a chapter on "Intelligence in a Free Society."

The two, he implies, are contradictory terms. For he makes this defense of absolute secrecy, a principle of a closed, not a free, society: "On the whole, Americans are inclined to talk too much about matters which should be classified . . . There are times when our press is overzealous in seeking 'scoops' with regard to future diplomatic, political and military moves.

We have learned the importance of secrecy in time of war, although even then there have been serious indiscretions at times. But it is well to recognize that in the cold war our adversary takes every advantage of what we divulge openly or make publicly available."